

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Britton-Hecla School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

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Dates of On Site Visit: September 29th and 30th, 2003

Date of Report: October 3, 2003

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Data sources used:

- B – District/agency instructional staff information
- C – Suspension and expulsion information
- D – Statewide assessment information
- E – Enrollment information
- F – Placement alternatives
- G – Disabling conditions
- H – Exiting information

Parent survey
Referrals
Publications of child find notices
Comprehensive plan
Yearly child find results
Pre-referral form
Reviews
NESC coop handbook
File reviews
Surveys
Special education expenditures
Private school information
Child count data
SIMS data
Budget
Workshops and in-services
Area training/TTL
Continuing education
Employee handbook
Board policies

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district has a system for receiving documented referrals. The school district has policies and procedures that meet the needs of all students referred. Help is provided in the classroom before a referral is made. Students placed out of district receive the same rights as those in district.

The district uses relevant school data to analyze and review student's progress toward the state performance goals and indicators. All but one student participated in the state and district wide assessment. One student used the STAARS.

The school district adheres to the state guidelines for reporting students who have been suspended, expelled, or dropped out of school.

Out of compliance

Paraprofessionals are not appropriately trained in the provision of special education and related services. Paraprofessional training is informal and provided by the teachers.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through observation, interview and a review of records, the monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team concluded the district needs to continue to improve and implement activities associated with the training of paraeducators. Through interviews with district staff, the monitoring team noted that the district has initiated activities to provide training to paraprofessionals. Paraeducators have been assigned to classroom teachers in order to observe the classroom activity and student programs. paraeducators are also participating in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) workshops. The district needs to

continue its efforts in assuring paraeducators receive adequate training to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. It was recommended that the district pursue the paraeducator training provided through their educational cooperative.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded that current practices and past reviews from the state and federal special education monitoring demonstrate the school district provides FAPE for all children with disabilities. All information is available to the monitoring team to review for assurances of this statement.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through observation, interview and a review of records, the monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded that the district is in compliance with evaluation procedures. Parents and teachers provide input into the evaluation process. Policies and procedures meet the state and federal regulations for the area of evaluation. The district utilizes valid and reliable evaluation instruments to determine the eligibility of students. Interpreters are available if needed. The IEP team considers all evaluation results to determine the appropriate category of disability for a student. Documentation of eligibility is provided to parents. All procedural requirements are met for proper re-evaluation and determining continued eligibility.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded 18% of files reviewed showed no functional evaluations being completed.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through observation, interview and a review of records, the monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting requirement as concluded by the steering committee with the exception of the issues stated below.

The monitoring team could not validate functional assessment as an area out of compliance as concluded by the steering committee. Through a review of 12 student files the team found functional assessment present for all students.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04:02. Determination of needed evaluation data

Parental input into the evaluation process:

The monitoring team could not validate parent input in the evaluation process as an area that meets requirements as concluded by the steering committee. Districts are required to ensure that a variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parent. The review team found the district has not ensured parental input in the evaluation process in 5 of 8 student files reviewed. The district does have a form for obtaining parental input. Interviews with staff indicate the form is sent to parents but is not always returned nor is a copy of the document placed in the student's record. Prior to the evaluation, special education personnel contact the families for input by phone or in person, but these efforts are not consistently documented.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded parents are informed of their rights. The district comprehensive plan addresses all the requirements for the appointment of a surrogate parent, confidentiality and access to records. Parents are fully informed, in their native language or another mode of communication, of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought. Consent is received for the provision of extended school year services. The district has had two hearing requests filed with the office of special education. One complaint was resolved in mediation and the other reached agreement with the school before mediation.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through observation, interview and a review of records, the monitoring team agrees with the areas identified by the steering committee as meeting requirements.

Out of compliance**ARSD 24:05:30:04. Prior notice and parent consent.****ARSD 24:05:30:05. Content of notice**

Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education and/or related services. The notice must include a description of each evaluation procedure, test, record or report that the district intends to use as a basis for the proposal or refusal. The monitoring team could not validate that parents are fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought. In 4 of 9 student files reviewed, prior notice content was missing completely or a complete listing of the areas to be evaluated were not included on the notice. For example, the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales was administered but was not included on the prior notice/consent as an area to be evaluated.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the district provides written notices with the required content to all parents and/or guardians when scheduling a meeting. Outside agencies are invited to meetings for students of transition age and other students in need of services not provided by the district. Present levels include student's strengths, weaknesses and other areas that need to be addressed. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure IEPs are appropriately developed and in effect for each eligible student.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded reevaluations did not consistently meet the 3 year timeline requirements, and the annual IEP team meeting was not consistently held within the 1 year timeline. Information regarding the transfer of rights was not provided to a student one year prior to turning age 18.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded a complete course of study was not developed for students 14 years or older. Modifications did not always include the frequency and location. The present levels of performance did not consistently include documentation of functional evaluations, transition services, how the disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum or parent input.

Validation Results**Meets Requirement**

The monitoring team could not validate the annual review timeline as an area in need of improvement. In 100% of the files reviewed, the annual review was conducted within 365 days. The team considers this an area that meets requirements.

The monitoring team could not validate parent input in the IEP or modifications as an area out of compliance. In 100% of the files reviewed, parent input was documented in the present levels of

performance. Frequency and location information was documented for student modifications. The monitoring team considers these areas as meeting requirements.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees that the 3 year reevaluation timeline and student transfer of rights are areas in need of improvement as concluded by the steering committee. The 3 year reevaluation timeline was met in 7 of 8 files reviewed and the transfer of rights occurred 1 year prior to the student turning 18 in 2 of 3 files reviewed.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

Course of study:

For each student beginning at age 14 or younger if determined appropriate by the placement committee, and updated annually, a statement of the transition service needs of the student under the applicable components of the student's individualized education program that focuses on the student's course of study such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program.

Through interview and file reviews a course of study was not developed for 3 of 6 students. The course of study stated, "refer to attached sheet". The document attached was a copy the student's grade sheet which did not represent a statement of transition service needs regarding the student's future coursework.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

Present level of performance:

A statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, related to:

- (a) Meeting the student's needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum; and
- (b) Meeting each of the student's other educational needs that result from the student's disability.

Through interview and file reviews the monitoring team found a variety of concerns related to the use of functional assessment to develop the present level of performance statements and annual goals.

For example the present level of performance for a student of transition age, included skills from the previous comprehensive evaluation with current information describing that the student was "working very hard on her own." She could check with the learning center teachers occasionally if she needed help. Transition skills were not specified in the present level of performance and the only goal developed in the IEP was for the student to complete their assignments. In another file, a transition plan was developed, however, transition evaluation information was not addressed in the present level of performance. The present level of performance in another IEP appeared to be a copy of the evaluation report. The present level of performance contained many specific skills related strength and needs, however, the only goal developed for the student was to "demonstrate the basic knowledge necessary to complete the requirements to achieve five (5) units of credit toward high school graduation."

In six files reviewed, annual goals did not represent a skill the student could reasonably accomplish within a 12 month period. For example, "she will improve writing skills." Other goals seemed to restate the course curriculum, for example, "will use different math properties to solve equations, solve operations using variable expressions, know how to compute prime and composite numbers, figure ratios, add, subtract, multiply and divide negative numbers, simplify expressions and graph coordinate planes to complete the credits necessary for a high school math credit." The description of how the disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum was not evident in 2 of 9 files reviewed. In addition to addressing the technical issues in the above examples, it is the determination of the monitoring team that there is a lack of correlation between assessment information and resulting goals and objectives. The staff needs to address how functional assessment is used to

develop a students present level of performance and an appropriate program of prioritized goals and objectives.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

Progress reports:

Parents must be regularly informed (through such means as periodic report cards), at as often as parents are informed of their non-disabled student's progress of:

- (a) Their student's progress toward the annual goals; and
- (b) The extent to which that progress is sufficient to enable the student to achieve the goals by the end of the year.

Through a review of student records and interview, the monitoring team found that current progress reports do not consistently address progress toward annual goals or the extent that progress is sufficient in a goal area. District staff were unaware that the new IEP program recently implemented provided a template for reporting progress. The documents used to report on goal by the teachers do not consistently meet the reporting requirements.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

Configuration of service:

A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the student is to be documented in the IEP. The public agency must ensure that all services set forth in the child's IEP are provided, consistent with the child's need as identified in the IEP.

Through a review of student records, the monitoring team found that the special education services to be provided was not specified in 8 of 12 files. For example, in the IEP, the special education service to be provided stated "special education services". This statement does not identify the specific service (i.e. reading, math, articulation) needed by the child.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment
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After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district policies and procedures meet the requirements for addressing the least restrictive environment of students. Behavioral intervention plans have been written for students who require them. Placement decisions are made by the IEP team. The district pays for preschool services when the team determines it is appropriate.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meets requirements as concluded by the steering committee.